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TAGS: [CASC](#) [CMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [KFRD](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: New Synergy in India American Citizen Services

REF: 2009 New Delhi 2504

¶1. Summary: American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit Chiefs and Senior Locally Engaged Staff (LES) from all India posts convened in New Delhi January 20-22, 2010 for a Mission-wide ACS conference - the first of its type in institutional memory. The goals of this conference were to promote consistency between posts, share resources, expand outreach, coordinate crisis management efforts, and discuss how to tackle growing challenges in India. End summary.

¶2. ACS work is now demanding greater attention: The overall number of Americans traveling to India has doubled since 2003, and with this, there is a substantial rise in child abduction cases, surrogacy cases, arrests and extradition cases. At the India ACS Conference, participants laid the groundwork for a Mission-wide ACS strategic plan, and discussed how best to capitalize on existing resources at each post. The ACS units are studying the resources required to address successfully this increasing need, and to maintain and improve the Mission's crisis preparedness and warden system in these vast consular districts, where a prison visit can easily require three days out of the office.

¶3. The greatest outcome of this conference was linking colleagues, including ACS LES with 10+ years of experience who had never met their counterparts from other posts. Different posts volunteered to act as the lead on outreach efforts, the warden program, standardizing crisis management materials, assistance to victims of crime, and compilation of resources needed to meet the mission-wide goals.

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Challenges Facing India's ACS Units  
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¶4. During this conference, participants discussed challenges facing the ACS sections in India, including crisis management, surrogacy, International Parental Child Abductions (IPCA), assistance to victims of crime, and working with the mentally ill. A representative from Consular Affairs and local specialists participated in many of the sessions and offered guidance in their areas of expertise.

¶5. Crisis Management discussions included lessons learned during the Mumbai attacks from both the Mumbai and Department perspectives. Participants also tested out the "fly-away kit" equipment which would be used in a natural disaster or situation when standard communication systems fail or are unavailable. Information Management staff anticipate all India posts will have complete fly-away kits this year, to include satellite phones, B-GAN satellite modem, and portable scanners and printers.

¶6. The great potential for fraud in CRBA cases involving surrogacy is a continuing concern. Mission India would like to implement a DNA testing requirement for all CRBA applications involving surrogacy, and is awaiting Consular Affairs guidance on this matter. (See REFTEL.) ACS Units also discussed apprehension about local

notaries, many of whom do not require a person to be present when notarizing documents. This is of particular concern regarding signatures of consent to issue passports to minors.

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Coordinated Efforts  
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¶7. The ACS Chiefs now have weekly conference calls, and new Mission-wide ACS email groups facilitate coordination of programs as well as assistance to travelers moving between consular districts. All posts have started using a customized call tracking system to determine the types of calls and emails being received, to measure better the need for and allocation of resources.

¶8. Appointments: To reduce wait times and help ensure that American citizens receive prompt, efficient service, all posts in Mission India will implement an online appointment system by March 1, 2010 for routine citizen services. Posts are coordinating their implementations and changes to their websites. Mission India will provide a unified message for the press release and websites to announce the new appointment system. In a longer-term goal, the messages portrayed throughout the ACS websites will be coordinated and standardized.

¶9. Outreach: Mission India is determined to promote registration of Americans living in and traveling to India. Newly-designed bookmarks with registration details and contact information for the posts in India will soon be available to American travelers to India. One of the two U.S. airlines with direct flights to India has already agreed to distribute these bookmarks at check-in, and if the program shows an increase in registrations, it will be carried

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over to other airlines as well.

¶10. India's ACS units look forward to greater collaboration with each other and others in the region and are committed to strengthening the communication with the rest of Mission India and the Department. Mission India thanks CA/Overseas Citizens Services for its support of and involvement in this conference.

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